2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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a chthonic aspect. Juok is almost otiose so far as the daily life of the Shilluk is concerned, assistance being generally sought from Nyakang, whose flight from the land of Dimo in the Bahr el Ghazal to become the founder and first king of the Shilluk nation we have already recorded.

Mr. Heasty writes to us of the very numerous meanings attached to the word *juok* in varying senses at different times :—

> "He appears to be one, and yet he seems to be a plurality as well, and the native himself is puzzled. . . . He will say there is but one *juok*, and then he will say of one who has been extremely fortunate that his *juok* is very good, while he speaks of another who is less fortunate as having a bad or angry *juok*. The foreigner is spoken of as *juok* because of the marvellous things he does. He flies through the air, or makes a machine that talks, so he is a *juok*. A badly wounded animal that is lost in the grass is *juok*, because it walked off dead and could not be found. . . . *Juok* is the creator of mankind, and the universe . . . but anything that the Shilluk cannot understand is *juok*."

Apart from his formal cult, Nyakang is the hero or subject of an enormous amount of folklore, and Hofmayr gives a list of twenty-five epithets or synonyms.[1] Yet, although he is a culture hero, at once the founder of the nation and the present day ideal of the Shilluk, we hold that Nyakang is no mythical figure projected on an historical background, but an historical ruler whose deeds and sayings—apart from obviously mythical elements—as enshrined in Shilluk legend and belief do constitute a record of actual happenings. Regarding the Shilluk attitude to Nyakang, we have no doubt that in spite of the saurian element in his ancestry (pp. 85–6) the majority of Shilluk think of Nyakang as a divine or semi-divine being, human in form and physical qualities, though, unlike his recent successors, he did not die but disappeared in a great storm of wind during a festival held at Akurwa; moreover, in spite of the fact that the objects kept in his shrines are fit for the use only of a creature with a human body, we believe that to many of his worshippers, including some at least of his priests, Nyakang is essentially a spiritual being, who manifests himself to humanity by way of incarnation or sometimes (as in dreams) as a bright light. We also recognize that in writing of the "spirit of Nyakang", as we frequently shall in this chapter, we are using the terminology of the European rather than of the African, who simply says "Nyakang", our reasons for not following the latter being that such usage leads to an ambiguity in view of the many

[1] Op. cit., 43, 44.

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

THE SHILLUK OF THE UPPER NILE

By GODFREY LIENHARDT

121 THIS essay is based primarily on literary sources,[1] which contain unusually full references to the religious and cosmological ideas of the Shilluk. In places, I have reinterpreted earlier writings on the Shilluk in the light of my own knowledge of the related Dinka, and of other 171 Nilotic studies. The concepts of these Nilotic peoples are alike in many ways, and the Shilluk and Dinka have for long been considered as related, from the point of view of anthropological theory, by the presence among them both of different forms of the institution of 'divine kingship', studied by Frazer and Seligman.[2] Upon this institution much of their interpretation of the universe and of their own place in it depend.

[771] Lack of definition and dogma in their religion and cosmology makes it 177 possible for Nilotic peoples to accept many different versions of their mythology and history, and also permits some syncretism of belief. I do not consider here speculations about the possible influences of ancient Egypt, the Fung, Islam, or the early monophysite Christianity of the Sudan, on Shilluk belief.[3] It is, in fact, remarkable that contact with foreign peoples and ideas, over a long period, should have left so little mark on Shilluk thought. Some of the stories which Hofmayr[4] attributes to Christian in- [114] fluence are widely known among other Nilotic peoples and elsewhere, in places farther removed from probable contact with Christianity. Lack of 772 formal definition of beliefs and notions about the universe also makes the 124 study of Shilluk cosmology necessarily a study based on inferences from [127] myths, hymns, and other texts, collected piecemeal from informants, none of whom can speak with any final authority. It is clear that Shilluk cosmology is not present to the mind of any one Shilluk as a single, orthodox system, [538] abstracted from the narrative flow and imaginative detail of myth. Even one man may tell slightly different versions of the same story,[5] for the telling is

[1] References throughout are to the Shilluk bibliography appended, the dates being the dates of the publications cited. Some of the sources contain many texts in the Shilluk language, and where these are translated into a language other than English, I have given an English version after examining the Shilluk text. I should like to thank all writers on the Shilluk, upon whose observations this summary and representation entirely depend. Their publications, however, are not all easily accessible, nor are they specifically concerned with the analysis of the Shilluk ideas here studied. This must be my excuse for writing about a people of great ethnological interest and importance, who have already been described in detail by writers who have known them well.

[2] J. G. Frazer, 1911. C. G. Seligman, 1911, C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, 1932.

[3] Discussion of Shilluk contacts with some of these will be found in W. Hofmayr, 1925, and D. Westermann, 1912. For general cultural and conceptual similarities between ancient Egypt and negro Africa, the reader may be referred to C. G. Seligman, 1934, and H. Frankfort, 1948, among others.

[4] 1925, pp. 195–6, the stories of a fall of man, and of a woman's bearing a god.

[5] D. S. Oyler, 1918 (i).

[p. 138]

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partly a creative process, and there is no writing to establish a preferred and approved text. Shilluk experience and knowledge of their world, which we here try to understand by analysis and systematization, is by them synthesized in an imaginative whole, at the centre of which are their early leader and hero, Nyikang, and the divine being which they call *juok*. Though *juok* is thought ultimately to dispose what happens in the universe, Nyikang, who created the Shilluk kingdom, is the subject of most mythology. There is nowhere any indication that the Shilluk have formulated elaborate ideas of the general order of all creation. Their notion of cosmogenesis is of the creation of that order which, as they see it, was built up by Nyikang, and has been maintained by his successors, the Shilluk kings. Before considering the wider significance of Nyikang and *juok*, it is convenient to give a brief account of the land of the Shilluk, the life they lead in it, and the general outlines of their social organization. With these in mind, it is possible to analyse their cosmological ideas in the broad outline to which an essay of this length is necessarily restricted.

Environment and History

The Shilluk live along the west bank of the Nile in the south of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, where their hamlets are built in close succession, following the line of the river from around Kaka to Lake No. They are about 110,000 people,[1] densely settled on a narrow strip of savannah country nearly 200 miles long, and four to five walking-hours in width. The soil is black and fertile near the river and its inlets, becoming sandier towards the neighbouring Arab country in the north and the Arab and Nuba country of Kordofan to the west. On the east bank of the Nile are the related Dinka, the Shilluks' neighbours to the east and south, and there are Shilluk settlements, bounded by Dinka and Nuer, on the east bank and on the lower reaches of the Sobat. Though their values are predominantly those of a cattle-herding people, the Shilluk lead a less pastoral, transhumant life than the Nuer or Dinka.[2] Their cattle are estimated at 25,000, and they keep sheep and goats. Since their settlements are strung along the bank of the Nile, they can find grass for their herds near home in the dry season, from January to April, and cultivation seems to receive more time and attention among them than among less sedentary Nilotes. From June to September the rains fall, and much of the country becomes flooded. The early rains are the time for sowing the staple crop of millet, of which many varieties are grown, along with maize, sesame, and various beans and pumpkins. These depend upon the rains, and are harvested between September and November. Tobacco, also called 'the grass of the ancestors', depends on hand-watering from the river, near which it is grown in the dry season.

[1] The authorities vary considerably in their estimates of the human and cattle population. The figures given here are quoted from those given by Mr. John Donald, of the Sudan Political Service, and published by Professor Evans-Pritchard, 1948.

[2] P. P. Howell and W. P. G. Thomson, 1946.

5:Lienhardt E-4 (no date) 1954 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

a cow, for example. In a text given by Westermann[1] the hare is taught and saved by *juok*. The hare (or rabbit) is said by Hofmayr to be the favourite figure in many Shilluk animal stories, and the stories quoted by him and by Westermann show how clever, and how lucky, the hare is. A story given by Hofmayr[2] about the hare's eating young crocodiles appears in a different form in Westermann,[3] where this act is attributed to Dak, the clever son of Nyikang. The moral of these stories is that astuteness and trickery, like knowledge, pay, and it seems as though unusual intelligence, ingenuity, and luck associate those who possess them with the divine intelligence, and the success for which God is the Shilluk explanation. Hofmayr gives as a translation for the Shilluk expression *juogo tarr*, 'that which I have from the highest being, my soul, my lot, luck, my other self, is favourable to me'.[4] The large number of Shilluk riddles is an indication of the high value set on cleverness and ingenuity, and it is to be expected that these qualities, held up for admiration in their stories and in their daily life, should be ideally associated with Nyikang and their kings.

The kings, and all others inspired by *juok*, are sacred because they manifest divine energy and knowledge, and they do so by being strong, cunning, and successful, as well as by appearing to be in closer touch with the supra-human than are ordinary men. The signs of this closer communion are dreams and 'hysterical' possession, or at least some outward sign of contact with a superior power. Examples of behaviour showing this are numerous. In the installation ceremonies of 1943, when the king-elect was set on the sacred stool of Nyikang at a climax in the ceremony, we are told that 'the *reth* (king) was seized with a trembling fit at the critical moment, and certainly he appeared to be in a dazed condition immediately afterwards'.[5] This form of behaviour is a common sign of possession by a power greater than human among other Nilotic peoples. Though there was some reference in these ceremonies to the king as the source of justice, and to the ethical qualities necessary in a ruler, they were clearly distinct from the central religious significance of the ceremonies. So also, though we find many references in Shilluk texts to God as the helper of the poor and the final court of appeal in trouble, his activity in these respects is not to be taken as an indication that he is only or primarily an apotheosis of ethical virtue. Many of the hymns to Nyikang and God are laments that the land is being destroyed because they are not helping, and we are told that when their prayers are not answered, the Shilluk may curse Nyikang for not assisting them.[6] A Shilluk proverb says that 'God threads good and evil men on a single string', suggesting that, in some circumstances at least, God does not seem to reward virtue and punish vice.[7] In other texts he is shown as the ultimate sanction for customary ethical behaviour, as a helper, and as a

[1] 1912, p. 180.
[2] Op. cit., 133.
[3] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 62.
[4] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 376.
[5] 1925, p. 376.
[6] Op. cit., p. 183.
[7] Oyler, 1918 (ii), p. 285.

12: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1919 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

EXAMPLES OF SHILLUK FOLK-LORE

BY Mrs. D. S. OYLER.

The natives call stories of this description «Lion Heads». Formerly they thought that if a person told them in day light he would be taken by a lion, hence they are nearly always told after the sun goes down. It is impossible to translate them word for word, as much is told in the gestures, and in the face of the narrator. With the above exceptions the following examples are literal translations.

1. The cormorant was looking about in the river, while the crocodile was swimming with his hunger. The cormorant was looked upon as a possible source of food, but then the crocodile noticed his pointed bill, and long neck. It looked too much like a spear and its handle to please the wily crocodile, and so he said, «Friend, why is your beak so sharp? Will it hurt people like a spear?» The cormorant replied, «You have said it». Then he offered to let the crocodile feel his sharp beak, which he did, and went away scared. As a result, the cormorants have always been able to swim peacefully on the river.

The crocodile then went to the Nile perch. He was afraid of the large mouth, and he said, «Friend, why are you so strong? Why is your mouth so large? Why are your shoulders so great?» It replied, «My mouth has no teeth. Put in your hand and see.» The crocodile did so, and said, «I was afraid of food». He ate that perch, and since then the crocodiles have eaten the Nile perch.

2. A lion was under a tree eating his kill, and he was discovered by the hyena, and the hyena ran in after the food and he snatched the food, and the male lion ran after it, and the hyena was tired from running, and he covered himself with mud, and he gave battle to the lion. The hyena would bite, and his teeth would sink into the lion, but when the lion bit the hyena his teeth slipped from the mud. And the lion died, and his mate came to